Infant-Baptism Unchristian:

AN

APPEAL

TO THE

Sacred Scriptures,

ADDRESSED TO EVERY

CHRISTIAN

IN THE

NORTH OF IRELAND.

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INFANT-BAPTISM

UNCHRISTIAN.

DEAR CHRISTIANS,

THE following thoughts are addreſſed to *you*, becauſe ye feel yourſelves inviolably bound to obey the law of Chriſt, and becauſe ye believe that the Holy Scriptures contain this law;—becauſe ye are Chriſtians. This character is important and dignified. A Chriſtian:—one who belongs to Chriſt; who imitates him, and ſhall be like him;—who in this tranſient ſtate follows him thro' good report and bad, and ſhall be with him in that ſtate which is glorious, permanent, and eternal;—one who is actuated by his ſpirit and conformed to his law.—Such is that great, that happy one—a Chriſtian.

This point has been finally decided by the teſtimony of the faithful and true witneſs.—"Ye are my friends if ye do whatſoever I command you (1.) Not every one who ſaith unto me Lord, Lord, ſhall enter into the kingdom of Heaven; but he who doth the will of my Father who is in Heaven (2.)" Such as depend for a relation to the Redeemer, on a mere name to live, he will repulſe in confuſion; "Ye workers of iniquity depart from me, I know you not(3). If any man *love* me, he will keep my words, and my father will *love* him.—He who loveth me not keepeth not my ſayings (4.)" "If any man *love not* the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, he ſhall be accurſed (5.)".

(1.) Joh. 15. 14.—(2.) Mat. 7. 21.—(3.) V. 23.—(4.) Joh. 14. 23, 24.—(5.) 1. Cor. 16. 22.

'Tis true all Chriſtians in many caſes both of omiſſion and tranſgreſſion, do offend againſt the perfect law of Chriſt. (6.) He who refuſes this charge gives God the *lie*. (7.) Yet ſurely he who makes it a part of his plan of conduct, to ſlight any one known command of Chriſt, claims the name of Antichriſt, not of Chriſtian. A Chriſtian indeed, will adopt into his plan, an impartial and univerſal reſpect to every known precept and prohibition of this law. Friendſhip for Chriſt, (8.) avowal of him as his own Lord (1.); the law of this Lord in his heart, (2.) and delight in this law after the inward man (3.) inſure ſo much.

The confidence that this is *your* character, that ye are preſſing after obedience to the will of Chriſt, in every inſtance, and ſearching for this will in his word, gives boldneſs in calling your attention to the ſupreme and ſingle deciſion of the word of Chriſt, in the caſe of *Chriſtian Baptiſm*.

This ordinance was inſtituted in thoſe words of Zion's King to his principal ſervants—"All power is given unto me in Heaven and earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, *baptizing* them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt: Teaching them to obſerve all things whatſoever I have commanded you. And ſo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the World." (4.) Go into all the World, preach the Goſpel to every creature. He who believeth and is *baptized* ſhall be ſaved. He who believeth not ſhall be damned." (5.)

Behold here that majeſtic *authority* which founds the whole of the Commiſſion, and this particular part—"All power in Heaven and in Earth is given unto me," THEREFORE, go, preach, THEREFORE, go, *baptize*. Jeſus aſſerts his own authority, ſingle and total, to inſtitute ordinances in his church: Nothing is left for any other. Whoever elſe preſumes to *inſtitute* in religion, arrogates a prerogative of the King of Kings. His ſingle authority excludes every other *reaſon* for this obſervance.

(6.) Ja. 3. 2.—(7.) 1. Joh. 1. 10.—(8.) Joh. 15. 14.—(1.) Col. 12. (2.) Heb. 8. 10.—(3.) Rom. 7. 22.

vance. None other is here ſtated; none other can be needed. The will and order of *him* who hath all power in Heaven and in Earth; What more? What greater could be interpoſed?

Behold here, the important *ſtation* allotted to this inſtitution. In the moſt brief ſum of Chriſtian duty—of what teachers were to teach and enjoin, and what the taught were to believe and obſerve, to the end of the World; by the immediate authority and expreſs inſtitution of Chriſt, baptiſm found a place; not only found a place, but ſet in the front of the Chriſtian life, is made the goal, or the firſt ſtep, for the believer in his public Chriſtian courſe.—Suitably to this important ſtation, to it, in particular, is annexed the dread name of *Deity*. The Meſſiah's ſupreme authority in Heaven and Earth muſt be kept in view in the adminiſtration, and ſo it is ſanctioned with the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt. Without the divine authority ſuch an obſervance would be not only unprofitable but criminal; but with ſuch authority it cannot be ſlighted without ſlighting that power which is paramount in Heaven and Earth, and deſpiſing the dread name affixed to this ordinance.—Baptiſm ſhares alſo in the *momentous ſanction* annexed to the law of Chriſt in this Commiſſion. He who believeth and is *baptized* ſhall be *ſaved*. Go teach all nations, thus preach the Goſpel to every creature. And lo! *I am with you* alway, even unto the end of the World.

Obſerve alſo in our Lord's words, the inſtituted *permanence* and *duration* of this ordinance. It is conjoined in the precept with preaching the Goſpel, and with teaching to obſerve all other Chriſtian ordinances. *Teach* the nations, *baptizing* them, teaching them to obſerve *all* things whatſoever I have commanded. The Goſpel was to be preached at the beginning, and muſt be preached ſtill. To obſerve what Chriſt hath commanded was duty then, and is duty ſtill. If baptiſm with water was duty then, it alſo is duty ſtill. The bleſſed preſence of Chriſt is annexed to this as well as to either of the other. He ſaid, "Teach all nations—teaching them to obſerve all things—and lo! I am with you alway"—He ſaid al-

ſo, "Baptizing them—and lo! I am with you alway, even to the end of the World."—The neglecter and deſpiſer of baptiſm has as little claim as the deſpiſers of the Goſpel have on the promiſed preſence of Chriſt.

The ſame words contain alſo a clear deciſion of the ſo much agitated queſtion, WHO *are to be baptized?* The command to *baptize*, as alſo that to inculcate all *chriſtian obſervances* are evidently of equal extent with the command to *teach*. The Apoſtles had commiſſion to propogate chriſtianity in all its parts, over the *whole World*. A certain *order* of proceeding, however, was appointed them in the execution of their commiſſion, Men were not to be firſt enjoined to eat the Lord's Supper, and to live together as brethren in Chriſt; then baptized; and laſt of all taught by the preaching of the Goſpel. Before they believe this Goſpel, they are, and muſt be totally incapable of every Chriſtian duty, and of every Chriſtian enjoyment. The order of procedure dictated by the Lord is—Firſt to *preach* the Goſpel to every creature capable of hearing it, and ſo to teach the nations: Next to *baptize* the believers of this Goſpel. None elſe have been indeed taught. Laſt of all to inculcate on all baptized believers the obſervance of all the duties proper to Chriſtians: ſuch as ſeparation from the World; aſſembling together; continuance in the Apoſtles "doctrine and fellowſhip, in breaking of bread and prayers." This order lies obvious to view in the Lord's words;—Go—teach—*baptizing*. Preach the Goſpel. He who *believeth* and is *baptized*.—Teaching them to *obſerve* all things whatſoever I have commanded.

The Apoſtles of our Lord underſtood his meaning, and punctually followed this order of procedure in executing their commiſſion.—On the firſt recorded occaſion after our Lord's aſcenſion, Peter having preached the Goſpel to the Jews, accoſts them, "Repent, therefore, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Chriſt, for the remiſſion of your ſins". (1.) Every one had been addreſſed by the Goſpel, every one was called to repent; every one to be baptized; but in the order of procedure,

(1.) Act. 2. 40.

procedure, repentance is previous to baptiſm. The perſon muſt appear to *be* a Chriſtian, ere he be initiated into the profeſſion; otherwiſe the profeſſion will be a deceit, and the ſubmiſſion to baptiſm hypocritical. Such deceit was avoided in the obſervance on this occaſion. None were *baptized* but "Such as *gladly received* the word." None elſe could be admitted. The command of the Lord muſt be obeyed in the *due*, the *dictated* order; or it is not at all *obeyed*.

It has been urged indeed, that this order is to be inverted in favour of the infant children of Chriſtians; but the context fully diſproves the poſition. To the injunction "repent and be baptized," the Apoſtle indeed adds, "for the promiſe is to you and to your *children*" (2.) Granting, however, that the infant ſeed of thoſe here addreſſed had *equal* intereſt as their parents, in this promiſe, the parents were not, and could not be admitted to baptiſm 'till their faith had appeared. So then, unleſs the infants could derive from the parents a better title than theſe parents themſelves poſſeſſed, they could not be admitted without the appearance of faith. Thus it muſt be; for the promiſe here meant is in v. 21 "Whoever ſhall *call* on the name of the Lord ſhall be ſaved." This is neither more nor leſs than a promiſe of ſalvation to every one who believeth; for "How ſhall they call on him in whom they have not believed." In this promiſe then, neither parent nor child has any intereſt until he believes; and in this reſpect both are exactly on a footing with the moſt abandoned, who alſo may obtain intereſt in the *ſame* promiſe, by *ſimilar* faith. So it is ſaid, "The promiſe is to *you*, and your *children*, and to *all who are afar off*: even as many as the Lord God ſhall *call*." None but ſuch as are ſo *called* by the Lord, that they are brought to *call* on him in whom they have believed, ſhall enjoy the benefit of this promiſe, whatever be his pedigree: and every one who is ſo *called* ſhall enjoy it in full, whatever has been his character.

But what totally unhinges all arguing for infant-baptiſm from this paſſage, is a view of the *fact*.—No infants were

(2.) Act. 2. 41.

were baptized on the occaſion. Had the Apoſtle intended to found the practice, the infant children of the 3000 who gladly received the word, would have been immediately baptized: for now their parents were believers. None, however, were baptized, ſave the perſons themſelves, who thus received it. None but ſuch as were capable of continuing in the Apoſtle's doctrine and fellowſhip, and in breaking of bread and in prayer. The infant's title founded on its parent's chriſtianity, was not then known. The notion ſeems to depend chiefly on another equally untrue; which is, that by the term *children* here, we muſt underſtand *infants*. And tho' it were true, ſince neither parent nor child has any intereſt in the promiſe but by faith, nor any title to baptiſm 'till this faith appears, it could be of no avail.

Every recorded inſtance of baptiſm, in the Apoſtolic practice, eſtabliſhes the ſame order of procedure. When the inhabitants of Samaria "Believed Philip preaching the name of Jeſus," and not 'till then, "they were baptized, both *men* and *women* (1.)" As *infants* could not hear nor believe, they had no concern in the matter. The ſorcerer muſt appear to believe that Jeſus is the ſon of God, ere he could be baptized. (2.) The Ethiopian eunuch muſt *previouſly* profeſs, "I believe that Jeſus Chriſt is the ſon of God" (3.) *After* Saul had ſeen the Lord, and ſaid, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do:" *After* he was inſtructed by Ananias, "He aroſe and was baptized" (4.) When Cornelius of Ceſarea and his company had "Heard and believed," and not 'till then, Peter commanded them to be baptized with water. (5.) At Phillippi, Lydia of Thyatira believed. She, with her *houſhold* were baptized (6.) This *houſhold*, now that ſhe ſeems to be abroad on buſineſs, might conſiſt of grown domeſtics or viſitants. At all events, they were believers; and as ſuch received conſolation from Paul and Silas after their enlargement from priſon. (7.) At the ſame city, the ſame perſons "Spake the word of God to the gaoler and to *all* that were in his houſe;" commanding to believe

(1.) Act. 8. 12.—(2.) V. 13.—(3.) V. 36. 38.—(4.) Ch. 9. 18.
(5.) Ch. 10. 47, 48.—(6.) Ch. 16. 14, 15.—(7.) V. 40.

believe in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt for ſalvation. He and *all* his were baptized ſtraightway, for they *all* believed in God, and rejoiced in him. (8.) At Corinth Paul preached; Criſpus, Gaius, and the houſhold of Stephanus, "*hearing*, *believed*, and were *baptized* (9). This houſhold was the firſt fruit of Achaia and eminent; ſuited to public miniſtration, and qualified to rule in the church (1). The twelve Diſciples whom Paul found at Epheſus, when they heard of faith in Jeſus and baptiſm obſerved the ordinance (2).

Thus we have ſeen that the recorded practice of the Apoſtles, as well as their commiſſion, excluded from baptiſm all but believers. Say ſome, thoſe examples were ſuited only to the infancy of the church, when perſons adult were converted immediately from heatheniſm, and ſo muſt appear to believe ere they could be baptiſed; but now the infant children of believers being born in the church are to be baptized. It would ſeem ſtrange however, if the *Infallible Guide*, giving rules for the conduct of his church, and declaring that thoſe rules muſt continue 'till the end of the world, ſhould give ſuch *abundance* of precept and pointed example ſuited to adult-baptiſm, which, as a general practice muſt be tranſient; and not give *one* direction, nor example, ſuited to infant baptiſm, when, by his own authority, it muſt be the prevailing practice 'till the end of time. The only reaſon why no one rule is to be found *ſuited* to infant baptiſm is, that this practice is totally *unſuitable* to the ſcriptural inſtitution of this ordinance. However, ſeveral texts, foreign to the ſubject, have been impreſſed into the ſervice of this practiſe.

The Saviour commanded—"Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of ſuch is the kingdom of Heaven"(1)—and received them graciouſly when brought to him for his bleſſing. Hence ſome ſay, "Infants of believing parents, being members of the *chriſtian church* which is the kingdom of Heaven here intended,

(8) Act. 16. 31.—(9) Ch. 18, 8. 1 Cor. 1. 14. 16.—(1) Ch. 16. 15, 16.—(2) Act. 19, 1-5.

intended, are to be admitted to baptiſm, a chriſtian privilege."—But, Jeſus did not here diſtinguiſh between the children of believers and others; nor ſeems to reſpect the character of their parents ſo much as their own. The *kingdom* of Heaven here mentioned is not the church, for into it none but the ſincere will poſſibly find acceſs (2); but into the church hypocrites often find their way (3.) But though infants were members of the viſible church, it would not follow that they are to uſe privileges otherwiſe than it is written—that they ſhould be baptiſed without faith—or eat the Lord's ſupper without diſcernment of the Lord's body. Above all, thoſe children came to Chriſt, not for baptiſm, but for his bleſſing. They obtained their errand; but as they came, ſo they departed, *unbaptized*:—and the paſſage having no relation to the ſubject can prove nothing concerning it. Still it ſhews, that children, even unbaptized, may enjoy the bleſſing of the Redeemer.

Paul declares—"The unbelieving huſband is ſanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is ſanctified by the huſband; elſe were your children unclean, but now they are holy"(1.) Hence 'tis urged, "children of even one believing parent are called holy. This holineſs cannot be moral, but muſt be that of external church-membership, as Iſrael was called an *holy* nation. But this reaſoning would prove too much; it would prove that an unbelieving parent, even while ſuch, by virtue of marriage with a believer, is a church-member. The *holineſs* aſcribed to the child is ſtated as a conſequence of the *ſanctification* of the unbelieving parent. If then, the holineſs conſtitute a church-member, much more ſhould the ſanctification conſtitute the ſame. If the child by this holineſs obtain church privileges, much more ought the parent by this ſanctification to obtain ſimilar privileges; and if the unbelieving parent's ſanctification cannot entitle him to church privileges, much leſs can his child's holineſs entitle it to the ſame.

Indeed the paſſage has no near connection with baptiſm. The caſe ſeems to be this. Iſraelites might not take

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Luke 18. 17.—(3) 2 Pet. 2. 1.—(1) 1 Cor. 7. 14.

take, nor retain in marriage heathen wives, but muſt abandon them both them and their offspring, becauſe legally *unclean*. (2). Some of the Saints at Corinth ſeems to have doubted if chriſtianity did not require exactly the ſame. The Apoſtle is here ſolving the doubt, and he anſwers the queſtion of ſeparation in the negative. He ſtates the reaſon in the text in queſtion. Had the tranſlators been ſufficiently careful to avoid punning, the whole might have been read with equal propriety and more perſpicuity. "Let him not put her away—let her not leave him. For the unbelieving huſband is *cleanſed* by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is *cleanſed* by the huſband; elſe were your children *unclean*, but now they are *clean*." The analogy by which the ſame word may ſignify both *clean* and *holy*, is ſufficiently obvious to juſtify this reading in the eye of the critic. This text then proves nothing reſpecting baptiſm.

The great argument in behalf of the practiſe is taken from the ancient uſe of circumciſion. "Baptiſm ſucceeds to circumciſion. The infants of Iſraelites were circumciſed, therefore the infants of Chriſtians ought to be baptized." To ſupport this view are brought ſome ſayings of Paul to the Romans—Abraham received the ſign of circumciſion, a "ſeal of the righteouſneſs of the faith—if the root be holy ſo are the branches." Thoſe texts, however, reſpect not the relation between Abraham and his ſeed natural; but, as appears by a candid view of the context, the relation between this Patriarch, as father of the faithful, and thoſe who are partakers of precious faith ſimilar to his, and ſo are his ſons. This brings to view an analogy between the two obſervances. Circumciſion belonged to every one who, by carnal birth, proved to be an Iſraelite. Baptiſm belongs to every one who, by an exhibition of like precious faith, proves to be born into the true family of Abraham, and an Iſraelite indeed. This, which makes nothing for infant baptiſm, ſeems to be the only view in which baptiſm comes in room of circumciſion. Otherwiſe there are many important differences.

(2) Deut. 7. 3 Ezra ch. 10.

ferences. They were never equal in their extent of application. In the former, even among adults, females were excluded; in the latter they are admitted. To the former even wicked perſons were admitted if they were of Jewiſh extraction; to the latter no adults muſt be admitted but ſuch as ſeem to believe. The former was connected with certain political relations and privileges; the latter not. Beſides, our Lord does not make the *previous exiſtence* of circumciſion, but *his own* authority the ground of baptiſm. Paul diſſuades the Galatians againſt circumciſion, not becauſe baptiſm had now ſucceeded in its room, but becauſe it was, with other legal ceremonies, now abrogated; and become one of the unprofitable *beggarly elements*.

But, 'tis argued, "to refuſe infant baptiſm and church-membership to the children of Chriſtians, is to charge the new and more glorious diſpenſation with abridging the privileges of the *people of God*, in this inſtance at leaſt." We have ſeen, however, that the privilege was not peculiar to the people of God. Iſraelites, wicked and righteous, and their ſeed, were circumciſed Beſides, this argument ſuppoſes, that exemption from obſervances merely external, abridges chriſtian privileges; if this be true, ſince now fewer opportunities of feſtivals, and none of feaſting on ſlain beaſts occur; ſince the various Jewiſh waſhings, &c. have ceaſed, privileges are, indeed, abridged. This argument then defeats itſelf.

The infant ſeed of Jews were admitted into the church, but the church was of the ſame extent as the ſtate. This privilege was merely external, for without faith in the Meſſiah, none were a whit nearer the enjoyment of the ſpiritual bleſſing promiſed to Abraham for their intereſt in this external church-ſtate, and in that covenant which founded their title. *Now*, the church in the form of an earthly kingdom, and the external covenant, the charter of this kingdom has ceaſed to exiſt (1). and the privileges and obſervances proper to them muſt ceaſe. Their abſence, however, is no diminution,

(1) John. 18, 38.

diminution, but an enlargement of privileges. The peculiar excellence of chriſtianity over Judaiſm conſiſts, not in the preſence, but in the abſence of obſervances merely external. The time is now come, that the true worſhippers ſhould worſhip the Father, and enjoy his favour, " in ſpirit and in truth."

But, what is the amount of this *ſuppoſed* abridgement of privileges?—Since the children of God " are *born*, not of blood, nor of the will of the fleſh, nor of the will of man, but of God ;(2)"to reckon external baptiſm abſolutely *neceſſary* to the ſalvation of infants, or *effectual* to render them *members of Chriſt*, and *heirs of the kingdom of Heaven*, muſt be groſſly erroneous. But the loſs of external church-membership is alledged—Now, could this, without Chriſt's own appointment, be a *privilege?* it muſt be external and unbleſſed; a curſe rather than a privilege; a profeſſion without reality; a deceit—could this be a privilege?

But ſuppoſing that mere external church membership were a privilege, what is the *amount of the loſs* by refuſing baptiſm to infants? and what the external advantage to the baptized above the unbaptized, from infancy 'till adult age? Two infants, one of chriſtian parents and baptized, the other of heathen parents and ſo unbaptized, are brought up together by the ſame pious and humane perſon. The Heathen, equally as the Chriſtian, is taught to read the ſcripture, is preſent at family devotion, and carried to public worſhip. At his requeſt he muſt be admitted to both baptiſm and the Lord's ſupper upon the *ſame* character neceſſary to procure for the other admiſſion to the latter. The ſum of his loſs then, and of the vaſt injury done by the Baptiſts to children can be nothing external, only the *ſprinkling*.

But, Is it not the duty of chriſtians to dedicate their all, and eſpecially their dear offspring, to God? Granted; but what hath rendered *ſprinkling with water* eſſential to ſuch dedication?

In fine, it will, no doubt, be urged, How could the practice of infant-baptiſm be ſo prevalent and permanent

(2.) Joh. 1. 13.

nent among Chriſtians, if it were not founded in ſcripture? The origin of this, like that of moſt other human inventions, as it lies far back in antiquity, and is there very minute, is of difficult inveſtigation. But as it has no foundation in the *Word*, it ſeems to ſpring from that wicked one, that Son of Perdition, who once ſat in the temple of God, and, by dictating his own abominations in room of the ſupplanted ordinances of the Almighty, exalted himſelf above all that is called God or worſhiped, aſſerting, that a Pope, or a Church hath power to enforce ordinances, and decree rites and ceremonies which are to be religiouſly obſerved.

It ſeems to owe its permanence to its flattery. It flatters the pride, by exalting the power of eccleſiaſtics, who can thus confer Chriſtian dignity; the fond pride of parents, as if the chriſtianity of their offspring flowed from themſelves; the pride of a nation which thus gets furniſhed with Chriſtians, its churches, its civil offices, its fleets and armies, even its taverns, brothels, workhouſes and priſons. It flatters the inhabitants of a nation; for thus a perſon may be an atheiſt, a deiſt, a miſer, a voluptuary, an adulterer, felon, or murderer, and ſtill a chriſtian! It gives a *name to live* to thoſe whoſe who are evidently *dead*, and removes the inconvenient diſcord between Chriſt and Belial. It thus flatters and accommodates men, without giving them the ſhame and trouble of confeſſing Chriſt, or ſubmitting to *his* ordinances before men.

In a word, this obſervance ſeems lovely to the human mind, *becauſe* it is the genuine offspring of human invention. No wonder if ſo many endearing qualities render it popular, and procure a perverted application of Scripture in its favour.

Some, no doubt, do not diſcern the *perverſion*, and believe that the practice is, indeed, founded on the word of God, and illuſtrated by divine light. They need, however, to beware leſt this light be only darkneſs. If the practice were of God, 'tis probable the wicked would hate it. Their univerſal friendſhip, if nothing elſe occurred, may lead to ſuſpect the divine diſapprobation.

From

From the above ſhort view of the doctrine of the word of God, and of the tenets of men, reſpecting baptiſm, it ſeems evident, that,

Chriſtian Baptiſm with water, by expreſs appointment of Chriſt, muſt continue in his Church to the end of the World, and that,

Infant Baptiſm, or, ſprinkling, is totally unwarranted in his law.

Viewing thoſe two propoſitions as truths now proved, as I muſt view them; let me addreſs a few words to you who reſpect the law of Chriſt; and firſt,

To ſuch as refuſe and neglect altogether, *Baptiſm with water.*

You cannot refuſe that baptiſm with water was intended by Chriſt in the appointment; nor that his apoſtles ſo underſtood him. This is obvious in the caſes of the Eunuch and of the family of Cornelius. The former "came out of the *water*" (1.) Of the latter, even after they had received the Holy Ghoſt, ſaid Peter, "who can forbid *water*, that theſe ſhould not be *baptized* who have received the Holy Ghoſt even *as we*" (2.)

Now, in this caſe, how can you juſtify yourſelves in the ſtated and determined neglect of what is inſerted as a command of Chriſt, in a commiſſion which looked forward to the end of the World; and what his Apoſtles obſerved, in execution of this commiſſion, as long as we have any authentic records of their practice? Will you make it a part of your religious plan to neglect an obvious command of Chriſt, and yet claim the character of—*His Friends?*

You perhaps alledge, baptiſm is a mere external, weak and unprofitable rite. 'Tis true, of itſelf it would be ſo. The Lord's Supper alſo, and the preaching of the Goſpel, would thus be unprofitable. But if Chriſt hath appointed them, and annexed his bleſſing to the dutiful obſervance. "*The fooliſhneſs of God is wiſer than men.*" "It pleaſed him, by the fooliſhneſs of preaching to ſave them who believe." He ſays, "He who *believeth* and is baptized ſhall be ſaved." So he hath commanded "Go, *teach—baptizing.*"

(1.) Act. 8. 36—38.—(2.) Ch. 10. 47, 48.

If you wiſh to reject the letter of the Word of God, preferring the *light within*; be aſſured, that which teaches to reject an obvious command of Chriſt, is *darkneſs* not *light*. If ye ſpeak not according to the Scriptures; to the law, and to the teſtimony; *it is becauſe there is no light in you*. Beware, "If the" ſuppoſed "light in you be darkneſs, how great is that darkneſs?"

If your moſt cogent reaſons be 'Such *has been our* OWN practice and that of our fathers. Unſteadineſs and change would be ſhameful to us.' Whether is better, with the Phariſees of old, to "reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep *your own tradition*," or with Paul, when he had ſeen the Lord, and was converted; to receive the divine word with obedient ſimplicity as little children, ſaying, "Lord, what wilt *thou* have me to do." "Search the *Scriptures*." Let them be a "light to your feet and a lamp to your path;" for they "are able to make you wiſe unto ſalvation."

Your ſimple manners, and ſocial regularity; ſtill more, your early and permanent attachment to the ſpirituality of Chriſt's kingdom, and its independence on the kingdoms of this world; and your uniform, ſteady abhorrence of every ſpecies and degree of perſecution for religious opinions, juſtly entitle you to the grateful eſteem of all the ſober-minded. But ſtill, as far as you avow, and perſiſt in a ſtated repugnance to the plain commands of Chriſt, it will be the duty of every Chriſtian to declare and to act upon it, "Let God be true and every man a liar."

Let me next addreſs,

You who confeſs that *baptiſm* with water is a duty incumbent on Chriſtians, and inſtead of it only practice *infant ſprinkling*.

You are more numerous and reſpectable in the religious world than the former claſs; but not leſs chargeable with oppoſition to the law of Chriſt. What is called infant-baptiſm, does not in the leaſt degree obviate the charge; for *ſprinkling* is not the *baptiſm* which Chriſt hath appointed. The means uſed to prove that it is, ſeem all of a piece with that uſed by a Monarch. He commanded the Tranſlators of the Scriptures to leave untranſlated the

the word *baptize*, thus he provided that its meaning might remain hidden, that he with his complaiſant clergy might more eaſily dictate to the conſciences of his ſubjects, and that in this inſtance ignorance might be the mother of their devotion. Arguments on the ſame ſide are founded in ignorance, and ſupported by prejudice and obſtinacy. If Scripture be adduced it is only that it may be perverted. He who, with the controverſy out of view, will candidly examine thoſe parts which treat of the ſubject and find that *baptiſm* is not *immerſion*; or that *ſprinkling* is *baptiſm*, muſt have a peculiar caſt of mind indeed. Now if *ſprinkling* be not the appointment; the uſe of it cannot excuſe the neglect of the *appointment*.

But tho' the mode were faultleſs, infant-baptiſm could not excuſe the neglect of Chriſtian-baptiſm. For the former we have ſeen that there is not the ſhadow of a warrant in the Word of God. The words of inſtitution do not include, but exclude infants. Now, if *baptiſm* had not been inſtituted, to practice it at all, muſt have been an obſervance unappointed—a piece of will-worſhip. *Infant*-baptiſm then, being unappointed, muſt be a piece of will-worſhip. Dare the Chriſtian offer, or will Chriſt accept, in the room of his *own* ordinance, what himſelf hath prohibited—the corrupt thing—will-worſhip. This obſervance, when conſidered deſtitute of appointment, inſtead of a duty, or an acceptable ſubſtitute for any duty, is a heinous ſin. In it a religious regard is paid to a human device: ſuch a device is raiſed to a level with an ordinance of God. Now, as the worſhip of God *conſiſts* in paying religious regard to *his* commands *alone*; a religious regard to this or any other unappointed rite, is a bold *proſtitution* of that worſhip which is due to *him alone*.

Farther, this proſtitution as it appears to be, is perpetrated in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt. If infant-baptiſm be unwarranted in the word of God; how can you preſume to affix to it *his* name? Is not this to ſay "Thus ſaith the Lord, when the Lord hath not ſaid." Would you dare to affix to any deed, the *name* of an earthly prince, a banker, or merchant, without his authority? And is it leſs adventurous ſo to treat the *name* of the *God of Heaven*.

Again, this groſs *miſuſe* of the Divine Name is employed in behalf of a hateful *uſurper*, ſupplanting the real *appointment* of Chriſt. It is thus not only deſtitute of divine appointment, but directly ſubverſive of the authority of God in his own ordinance. Thus *in the dread name of Deity* "Ye reject the commandment of God that ye may keep your own tradition."

Nor is the *perverſion* of Scripture in ſupport of this obſervance, a ſmall evil. Unwarranted in the word of God, not only is the obſervance in his name virtually a *forgery* on him; but every perverſion of Scripture in ſupport of this, is a new *forgery* invented to give circulation to the firſt: ſo the evil increaſes.

Now, my dear friends, on what ground do you reject a divine ordinance, and embrace a human device. On what ground do you *interrogate* an infant, *prate* to a child, *ſprinkle* with water one incapable of reflection, *in the name of Deity*. Dare you depend on your proofs from ſcripture! Do you dream with the Romaniſt, that without baptiſm infants cannot be ſaved; that *it* is certainly effectual for their ſalvation; and that it's efficacy depends on the good intention of a Prieſt? Do you imagine with the Epiſcopalian, that this rite does indeed render the child an "heir of glory and a member of Chriſt?" Do you ſuppoſe with the Preſbyterian and Independent, that you thus put the infant in poſſeſſion of religious privileges, to which you think it entitled?

After the divine declarations, "The ſons of God are born not of blood, nor of the will of the fleſh, nor of the will of man, but of God. It is not of him who *willeth*, neither of him who *runneth*; but of God who ſheweth mercy;" do you ſtill harbour the fond, pride-gratifying conceit and dangerous error, that an Eccleſiaſtic, in *ſprinkling*, or a Chriſtian parent by *procreating*, can confer Chriſtianity? Doth ſuch pride of communicating Chriſtianity attach you to the practice? Or, is it the ambition of being yourſelves, and having your children in the *faſhion*, and obtaining the *praiſe* of men? Doth the fear of reproachful *ſingularity* urge you to perſiſt in the practice? Or does the *ſhame* attending Chriſt and his ways, deter you from ſubmitting to Chriſtian-baptiſm?

Let

Let me rather aſcribe your conduct to ignorance. Even the ignorance and prejudices of the conſcientious claim ſome reſpect. But charity itſelf could ſcarcely admit this apology for you all. So much ignorance would be almoſt unaccountable. Yet, if any of you act contrary to your light in this matter, I would aſk you, *How dwelleth the fear of God in you?*

You who do approve of Chriſtian-baptiſm, and practice accordingly, need to guard on one hand, againſt a *light eſteem* of this ordinance; and on the other, againſt allowing it that *monopoly* of religious regard which is too often beſtowed on a diſtinguiſhing tenet or obſervance.

Among Baptiſts, ſome hold that this is indeed an ordinance appointed by Chriſt, but treat it as a non-eſſential. It is but an *outward* obſervance, and may be neglected without much offence. The neglectors or deſpiſers, provided we can think them ſincere, may obtain countenance and connivance in their neglect; for it is comparatively a trifle.—But ſay, how would it ſound for a *Chriſtian* to avow "This expreſs command of Chriſt is a trifle?" What can render any thing in chriſtianity important, if Chriſt's appointment cannot? Did he or his apoſtles ſpare falſe opinions or wicked practices, becauſe thoſe in whom they were found were ignorant of their malignity? Would this have been the beſt method of reclaiming?

A due regard to the law of Chriſt, and to this ordinance, becauſe contained in his law, will lead to treat it as *important*: to prefer it to the religious fellowſhip of even thoſe whom we may judge pious.—In religion nothing is ſo eſtimable as the preſence of Chriſt. This he *hath not* attached to the enjoyment of this or that good man's fellowſhip; but he *hath* attached it to the *obſervance* of whatſoever himſelf hath commanded. Such *obſervance* is the main *end* for which Chriſtian ſociety is valuable; and the end muſt never be ſacrificed to the means.

Thoſe of the other extreme, may be attached to Baptiſm, not ſo much becauſe it is an *inſtitution* of Chriſt, as becauſe it is their own diſtinguiſhed *obſervance*. This muſt ſeem the caſe, if in the circumſtances of the practice, the law of Chriſt be diſregarded. If, by the admiſſion

miſſion of perſons ignorant of the truth, and ſo ſtill in unbelief, the ordinance be proſtituted; if not only ſuch but thoſe alſo be admitted, who hold doctrines ſubverſive of this truth, and inconſiſtent with the nature and deſign of this ordinance; or, thoſe who indulge in licentious practices; where is any appearance of ſubjection to the law of Chriſt? Indeed this ſubjection ſeems wanting, wherever concurrence in the external obſervance procures indulgence in the ſtated violation of any one article in this law.

In ſuch caſes, not only is the ordinance of Chriſt proſtituted to improper perſons, but the very obſervance itſelf involves much inconſiſtency and deceit. The Unitarian baptizes in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt. In this the Trinitarian will probably view him as (according to Unitarian tenets) worſhipping others beſide the True God. He will view the Trinitarian, in like caſe, as *indeed* guilty of worſhipping others beſide God; but (according to Trinitarian tenets) as worſhipping more *Gods* than one. If concurrence in the rite can unite ſuch oppoſites, and lead them to admit each other into religious fellowſhip, this concurrence becomes the price of indulgence for that idolatry of which each ſuppoſes the other guilty. In the mean time, the profeſſion of unity involved in that fellowſhip is totally untrue.

If ſuch concurrence be the bond which unites the ſelf-righteous perſon, depending on the obſervance, as a part of that work by which he is to merit Heaven, to him who views it as a ſolemn renunciation of all dependence on any works of his own, or on any thing beſides the righteouſneſs of Chriſt; the doctrines of truth are ſacrificed to this concurrence, and the profeſſion of union is a mere empty pretence. If the obviouſly licentious are admitted, the meaning of the ordinance, as a ſign of union with, and conformity to Jeſus, is totally ſubverted. If any of his commands are ſacrificed to this concurrence, the end of baptiſm is perverted; for his laws are intended not to counteract, but to promote each other. If we call to mind, that in all this ſuppoſed idolatry, deceit, inconſiſtency, perverſion, and oppoſition to the law of Chriſt, the dread

name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt, is invocated, the conſideration becomes ſtill more ſolemn.

If any uſe baptiſm thus, it is to them a mere tradition and party-badge. Their zeal may be hot while they baptize *for ſtrife and debate*; only to ſupport their own party-pride; but will grow cold when the ſame pride may be gratified by oppoſite conduct. This view will account for many remarkable defections of once zealous religioniſts in various parties. Their zeal conſtituted nothing more excellent than will-worſhip; ſo being founded not on the *word of the Lord which endureth for ever*, but on the varying inſtability of the human mind, it muſt fluctuate like its cauſe.

A ſteady reſpect to the ſingle authority of the Lord of Glory, in this ordinance, will preſerve you from both extremes. With ſuch reſpect, you will treat the obſervance according to that importance with which he hath dignified it. You will not ſuffer it to ſupercede your regard to any other of his commandments. That divine authority which attaches you to baptiſm will, wherever it appears, arreſt your regards. You will be zealous for baptiſm, not *becauſe* yourſelves are called baptiſts, but *becauſe* you muſt be zealous for *all things*, whatſoever Chriſt hath commanded.

Thus, you will view this obſervance in that light in which the Lord Jeſus has ſet it, and find it not an empty rite, but an ordinance highly inſtructive, pregnant with the truth of the Goſpel. The ſign of Chriſt's *death* and *reſurrection* (1) and of your own *communion* with him in both; (2) ſo of your *juſtification* and ſanctification; of *death* to ſin and life to righteouſneſs (1.) of the *death* of this mortal body, and of a bleſſed *reſurrection* to immortality in conformity to the Head (2.) Rich with ſuch important meaning, the doctrine and obſervance of baptiſm are well fitted to promote the faith, hope, love, holineſs and comfort of believers. Thus it ſaveth not by the purifying of the filth of the fleſh; but by the anſwer of a good conſcience; a conſcience ſprinkled by the blood of Chriſt from dead works,

(1.) Rom. 6. 25.—(2.) Col. 2. 12. &c.

works, and fitted to ſerve the living God. Thus you will keep the ordinance in the *belief* of that *truth* which ſaves the ſoul—that *teſtimony* which God has given of his Son. Mat. 3. 17

In the above animadverſions on the *evil of neglecting*, and the *evil of perverting* the divine ordinance of baptiſm, many of you muſt feel yourſelves involved, and you will probably condemn them as ſevere. They proceed from a ſtrong view of the evils againſt which they are directed, and of the diſguſting contraſt which ſuch evils form in a character truly chriſtian; for every evil is *in* ſome creature; ſin is in the ſinner; deceit in the deceiver; we cannot oppoſe falſe doctrine or practice without oppoſing thoſe chargeable with it.—They proceed from a conviction that one chriſtian cannot in any other way ſo far befriend another, as by exciting him to abandon thoſe evils which mottle and deform his conduct, and ſo injure his ſpiritual health. A ſin ſubdued is a deadly enemy ſlain. Nor can this be ſucceſsfully attempted by flattery and extenuation of his faults, or by connivance at their continuance. By treating ſins, duties, and their differences, as matters of trivial concern, we do what we can to hide the deformity of iniquity. But ſurely *ſin* cannot be too ſeverely treated; its malignity can never be *over*-rated. In reproving it in a brother we are bound to promote rather his profit than his ſelf-complacence.

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